

Can't give proof: Skolnick

By Donald M. Schwartz

Sherman Skolnick conceded at a federal hearing Thursday that he could not produce evidence linking United Air Lines employes to "murder or sabotage" in connection with the United jet crash last Dec. 8 near Midway Airport.

Skolnick underwent persistent questioning from J. Richard Street, a UAL lawyer, during his second day of testimony at a special hearing of the National Transportation Safety Board in the Sheraton-O'Hare Hotel.

Skolnick, who calls himself a legal researcher, has contended that the United plane was sabotaged as part of a cover-up of the Watergate scandal.

Street asked Skolnick, "Is there any individual in United Air Lines who participated in murder or sabotage?"

Skolnick spoke of efforts to "cover up" the cause of the plane crash, then said, "The management is involved, yes."

Q. In what way?

A. Whether it was their own mechanic or they brought in an outsider to strip down the bus bar, we don't know. (On Wednesday, Skolnick had contended that a "stripped bus-bar," part of the electrical system, was a factor in the crash

that killed 45 persons.)

Q. Do you have any evidence?

A. You're a lawyer. You know how hard it is for me to answer that question. We are obviously searching for the very person that we can put the finger in his face.

Q. Can you do it?

A. Yes, eventually we will; we will put the finger right in his face.

Q. Now, you are under oath. What evidence do you have of United Air Lines in murder or sabotage?

A. The evidence is more in your rush to cover it up and your omissions.

Street observed, "I think the record itself will now show

what your evidence is."

Another bizarre aspect of the day's session was the testimony by Jean-Pierre Guilmant, public relations aide to Rep. George Collins (D-Ill.), who was killed in the crash.

Guilmant said "a friend" who reached the scene shortly after the crash saw a man in a "flight suit" walk off the plane.

Guilmant said the informant said the man in the flight suit was "a CIA agent he (the informant) knew from Europe in World War II."

However, Guilmant refused to name the informant and was unable to supply the name of the alleged Central Intelligence Agency man.